

YOUR KINDLE NOTES FOR:

The Choice: Embrace the Possible

by Edith Eva Eger

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49 Highlights | 3 Notes

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 6

Freedom lies in learning to embrace what happened. Freedom means we muster the courage to dismantle the prison, brick by brick.

Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 7

If you asked me for the most common diagnosis among the people I treat, I wouldn't say depression or post-traumatic stress disorder, although these conditions are all too common among those I've known, loved, and guided to freedom. No, I would say hunger. We are hungry. We are hungry for approval, attention, affection. We are hungry for the freedom to embrace life and to really know and be ourselves.

This surprises me not at all

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 7

My own search for freedom and my years of experience as a licensed clinical psychologist have taught me that suffering is universal. But victimhood is optional.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 8

I don't want you to hear my story and say, "My own suffering is less significant." I want you to hear my story and say, "If she can do it, then so can I!"

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 9

Often, the little upsets in our lives are emblematic of the larger losses; the seemingly insignificant worries are representative of greater pain.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 9

Survivors don't have time to ask, "Why me?" For survivors, the only relevant question is, "What now?"

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 19

It took me many decades to discover that I could come at my life with a different question. Not: Why did I live?
But: What is mine to do with the life I've been given?

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 28

"Can we do the four questions?" I ask to disrupt my parents' gloom. That is my job in the family. To play peacemaker between my parents, between Magda and my mother. Whatever plans are being made outside our door I can't control. But inside our home, I have a role to fill. It is my job as the youngest child to ask the four questions. I don't even have to open my Haggadah. I know the text by heart. "Why is this night different from all other nights?" I begin. At the end of the meal, my father circles the table, kissing each of us on the head. He's crying. Why is this night different from all other nights? Before dawn breaks, we'll know.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 31

My father gazes at the dark space. For a moment he seems confused, as though he can't determine whether the soldier has been generous or unkind. Then the soldier kicks him in the knee and my father hobbles toward us, toward the wagon where the other families wait. I'm caught between the urge to protect my parents and the sorrow that they can no longer protect me. Eric, I pray, wherever we are going, help me find you Don't forget our future. Don't forget our love. Magda doesn't say a word as we sit side by side on the bare board seats. In my catalog of regrets, this one shines bright: that I didn't reach for my sister's hand.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 34

I see the sign: ARBEIT MACHT FREI. Music plays. My father is suddenly cheerful. "You see," he says, "it can't be a terrible place." He looks as though he would dance if the platform weren't so crowded. "We'll only work a little, till the war's over," he says. The rumors we heard at the brick factory must be true. We must be here to work.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 37

"All your ecstasy in life is going to come from the inside," my ballet master had told me. I never understood what he meant. Until Auschwitz.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 38

Magda finally speaks to me. "How do I look?" she asks. "Tell me the truth." The truth? She looks like a mangy dog. A naked stranger. I can't tell her this, of course, but any lie would hurt too much and so I must find an impossible answer, a truth that doesn't wound. I gaze into the fierce blue of her eyes and think that even for her to ask the question, "How do I look?" is the bravest thing I've ever heard. There aren't mirrors here. She is asking me to help her find and face herself. And so I tell her the one true thing that's mine to say. "Your eyes," I tell my sister, "they're so beautiful. I never noticed them when they were covered up by all that hair." It's the first time I see that we have a choice: to pay attention to what we've lost or to pay attention to what we still have. "Thank you," she whispers.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 40

In the private darkness within, I hear my mother's words come back to me, as though she is there in the barren room, whispering below the music. Just remember, no one can take away from you what you've put in your own mind. Dr. Mengele, my fellow starved-to-the-bone inmates, the defiant who will survive and the soon to be dead, even my beloved sister disappear, and the only world that exists is the one inside my head. "The Blue Danube" fades, and now I can hear Tchaikovsky's Romeo and Juliet. The barracks floor becomes a stage at the Budapest opera house. I dance for my fans in the audience. I dance within the glow of hot lights. I dance for my lover, Romeo, as he lifts me high above the stage. I dance for love. I dance for life. As I dance, I discover a piece of wisdom that I have never forgotten. I will never know what miracle of grace allows me this insight. It will save my life many times, even after the horror is over. I can see that Dr. Mengele, the seasoned killer who just this morning murdered my mother, is more pitiful than me. I am free in my mind, which he can never be. He will always have to live with what he's done. He is more a prisoner than I am. As I close my routine with a final, graceful split, I pray, but it isn't myself I pray for. I pray for him. I pray, for his sake, that he won't have the need to kill me. He must be impressed by my performance, because he tosses me a loaf of bread—a gesture, as it turns out, that will later save my life. As evening turns to night, I share the bread with Magda and our bunkmates. I am grateful to have bread. I am grateful to be alive.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 42

Food fantasies sustained us at Auschwitz. Just as athletes and musicians can become better at their craft through mental practice, we were barracks artists, always in the thick of creating. What we made in our minds provided its own kind of sustenance.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 43

We can choose what the horror teaches us. To become bitter in our grief and fear. Hostile. Paralyzed. Or to hold on to the childlike part of us, the lively and curious part, the part that is innocent.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 44

I knew a girl at Auschwitz who was very ill and wasting away. Every morning I expected to find her dead on her bunk, and I feared at every selection line that she'd be sent toward death. But she surprised me. She managed to gather strength each morning to work another day and kept a lively spark in her eyes each time she faced Mengele's pointing finger in a selection line. At night she would collapse onto her bunk, breathing in rasps. I asked her how she was managing to go on. "I heard we're going to be liberated by Christmas," she said. She kept a meticulous calendar in her head, counting down the days and then the hours until our liberation, determined to live to be free. Then Christmas came, but our liberators did not. And she died the next day. I believe that her inner voice of hope kept her alive, but when she lost hope she wasn't able to keep living. While nearly everyone around me—SS officers, kapos, fellow inmates—told me every moment of every day, from Appell to the end of the workday, from selection lines to meal lines, that I would never get out of the death camp alive, I worked to develop an inner voice that offered an alternative story. This is temporary, I'd tell myself. If I survive today, tomorrow I will be free.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 48

It is no exaggeration to say that I live for my sister. It is no exaggeration to say that my sister lives for me. There is chaos in the yard. I don't know what the lines mean. The only thing I know is that I must pass to whatever lies ahead with Magda. Even if what lies ahead is death. I eye the gap of crusted-over snow that separates us. Guards ring us. I don't have a plan. Time is slow and time is fast. Magda and I share a glance. I see her blue eyes. And then I am in motion. I am doing cartwheels, hands to earth, feet to sky, around, around. A guard stares at me. He's right side up. He's upside down. I expect a bullet any second. And I don't want to die, but I can't keep myself from turning around again and again. He doesn't raise his gun. Is he too surprised to shoot me? Am I too dizzy to see? He winks at me. I swear I see him wink. Okay, he seems to say, this time, you win. In the few seconds that I hold his complete attention, Magda runs across the yard into my line to join me. We melt back into the crowd of girls waiting for whatever will happen next.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 56

If I survive today, tomorrow I will be free. I sing the chant in my head.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 58

"Where is the little criminal?" he asks again. He will spot me any second. Or he will spy the carrot tops poking out of Magda's coat. I can't bear the suspense of waiting for him to recognize me. I drop to the ground and crawl toward him. Magda hisses at me, but it's too late. I crouch at his feet. I see the mud on his boots, the grain of the wood on the floor. "You," he says. He sounds disgusted. I close my eyes. I wait for him to kick me. I wait for him to shoot. Something heavy drops near my feet. A stone? Will he stone me to death, the slow way? No. It's bread. A small loaf of dark rye bread. "You must have been very hungry to do what you did," he says. I wish I could meet that man now. He's proof that twelve years of Hitler's Reich isn't enough hate to take the good out of people. His eyes are my father's eyes. Green. And full of relief.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 64

This is the Death March, from Mauthausen to Gunskirchen. It is the shortest distance we have been forced to walk, but we are so weakened by then that only one hundred out of the two thousand of us will survive. Magda and I cling to each other, determined to stay together, to stay upright. Each hour, hundreds of girls fall into the ditches on either side of the road. Too weak or too ill to keep moving, they're killed on the spot. We are like the head of a dandelion gone to seed and blown by the wind, only a few white tufts remaining. Hunger is my only name.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 64

I don't know that I have stumbled until I feel the arms of Magda and the other girls lifting me. They have laced their fingers together to form a human chair. "You shared your bread," one of them says. The words don't mean anything to me. When have I ever tasted bread? But then a memory rises up. Our first night at Auschwitz. Mengele ordering the music and Mengele ordering me to dance. This body danced. This mind dreamt of the opera house. This body ate that bread. I am the one who had the thought that night and who thinks it again now:

Mengele killed my mother; Mengele let me live. Now a girl who shared a crust with me nearly a year ago has recognized me. She uses her last strength to interlace her fingers with Magda's and those of the other girls and lift me up into the air. In a way, Mengele allowed this moment to happen. He didn't kill any of us that night or any night after. He gave us bread.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 68

And then a patch of light explodes on the ground. Here's the fire. At last. I am surprised that it makes no noise. The soldiers turn. My numb body suddenly flushes hot—from flame, I think, or fever. But no. There is no fire. The gleam of light isn't fire at all. It is the sun colliding with Magda's sardine can! Whether on purpose or by accident, she has arrested the soldiers' attention with a tin of fish. They are returning. We have one more chance. If I can dance in my mind, I can make my body seen. I close my eyes and concentrate, raising my hands above my head in an imaginary arabesque. I hear the soldiers yell again, one to the other. One is very close to me. I keep my eyes locked shut and continue my dance. I imagine that I am dancing with him. That he lifts me over his head like Romeo did in the barracks with Mengele. That there is love and it springs out of war. That there is death and always, always its opposite. And now I can feel my hand. I know it is my hand because the soldier is touching it. I open my eyes. I see that his wide, dark hand circles my fingers. He presses something into my hand. Beads. Colorful beads. Red, brown, green, yellow. "Food," the soldier says. He looks into my eyes. His skin is the darkest I have ever seen, his lips thick, his eyes deep brown. He helps me lift my hand to my mouth. He helps me release the beads onto my dry tongue. Saliva gathers and I taste something sweet. I taste chocolate. I remember the name of this flavor. Always keep a little something sweet in your pocket, my father said. Here is the sweetness.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 74

The soldiers bring us to the room where we will sleep. It's the nursery. We are the orphans of war. They lift me into a wooden crib. I am that small; I weigh seventy pounds. I can't walk on my own. I am a baby. I barely think in language. I think in terms of pain, of need. I would cry to be held, but there's no one to hold me. Magda curls into a ball on the little bed.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 79

Later there will be doctors to help us repair our physical health. But no one will explain the psychological dimension of recovery. It will be many years before I begin to understand that.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 81

Survival is black and white, no "buts" can intrude when you are fighting for your life. Now the "buts" come rushing in. We have bread to eat. Yes, but we are penniless. You are gaining weight. Yes, but my heart is heavy. You are alive. Yes, but my mother is dead.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 88

When you can't go in through a door, go in through a window, our mother used to say. There is no door for survival. Or recovery either. It's all windows. Latches you can't reach easily, panes too small, spaces where a body shouldn't fit. But you can't stand where you are. You must find a way.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 96

On my last night in the TB hospital, I lie in my snug little room and a voice comes to me, from the bottom of the mountains, from the very center of the Earth. Up through the floor and thin mattress, it envelops me, charges me. If you live, the voice says, you've got to stand for something.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 135

It will be more than twenty years before I will have the language and psychological training to understand that I was having a flashback, that the unnerving physical sensations—racing heart, sweaty palms, narrowing vision—I experienced that day (and that I will continue to experience many times in my life, even now, in my late eighties) are automatic responses to trauma. This is why I now object to pathologizing post-traumatic stress by calling it a disorder. It's not a disordered reaction to trauma—it's a common and natural one. But on that November morning in Baltimore I didn't know what was happening to me; I assumed that my collapse meant that I was deeply flawed. I wish I had known that I wasn't a damaged person, that I was suffering the fallout of an interrupted life.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 155

"Have you read this?" He shows me a small paperback: *Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl. It sounds like a philosophy text. The author's name doesn't ring a bell. I shake my head. "Frankl was at Auschwitz," the student explains. "He wrote this book about it, just after the war. I think you would find it of interest," he says, offering it to me. I take the book in my hand. It is slim. It fills me with dread. Why would I willingly return to hell, even through the filter of someone else's experience? But I don't have the heart to reject this young man's gesture. I whisper a thank you and tuck the little book into my bag, where it sits all evening like a ticking bomb.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 156

In those predawn hours in the autumn of 1966, I read this, which is at the very heart of Frankl's teaching: Everything can be taken from a man but one thing: the last of the human freedoms—to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way. Each moment is a choice. No matter how frustrating or boring or constraining or painful or oppressive our experience, we can always choose how we respond. And I finally begin to understand that I, too, have a choice. This realization will change my life.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 160

My sustenance came from an unexpected source. One day in 1968, I came home to find a letter in the mailbox addressed to me in a European-looking hand, sent from Southern Methodist University, in Dallas. There was no name above the return address, only initials: V. F. When I opened the letter, I almost fell over. From one survivor to another, the salutation read. The letter was from Viktor Frankl. Following my predawn immersion in *Man's Search for Meaning* two years earlier, I had written an essay called "Viktor Frankl and Me." I had written it for myself, it was a personal exercise, not an academic one, my first attempt to speak about my past. Timidly, cautiously hopeful for the possibility of personal growth, I had shared it with some professors and some friends, and eventually it had found its way into a campus publication. Someone had anonymously mailed a copy of my

article to Frankl in Dallas, where, unbeknownst to me, he had been a visiting professor since 1966. Frankl was twenty-three years my senior—he had been thirty-nine years old, already a successful physician and psychiatrist, when he was interned at Auschwitz. Now he was the celebrated founder of Logotherapy. He had practiced, lectured, and taught all over the world. And he had been moved enough by my little essay to contact me, to relate to me as a fellow survivor, as a peer. I had written about imagining myself onstage at the Budapest opera house the night I was forced to dance for Mengele. Frankl wrote that he had done something similar at Auschwitz—in his worst moments, he had imagined himself a free man, giving lectures in Vienna on the psychology of imprisonment. He had also found a sanctuary in an inner world that both shielded him from his present fear and pain, and inspired his hope and sense of purpose—that gave him the means and a reason to survive. Frankl’s book and his letter helped me find words for our shared experience. So began a correspondence and a friendship that would last for many years, in which we would try together to answer the questions that ran through our lives: Why did I survive? What is the purpose in my life? What meaning can I make from my suffering? How can I help myself and others to endure the hardest parts of life and to experience more passion and joy? After exchanging letters for several years, we met for the first time at a lecture he gave in San Diego in the 1970s. He invited me backstage to meet his wife and even asked me to critique his talk—a hugely important moment, to be treated by my mentor as a peer. Even his first letter nourished in me the seed of a calling: the search to make meaning in my life by helping others to make meaning, to heal so that I could heal others, to heal others so that I could heal myself. It also reinforced my understanding, however misapplied when I divorced Béla, that I had the power and opportunity—as well as the responsibility—to choose my own meaning, my own life.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 170

Why did so many inmates wander out of the gates of the camp only to return to the muddy, festering barracks? Frankl had noted the same phenomenon at Auschwitz. Psychologically, what was at work to make a liberated prisoner reject freedom? Seligman’s experiments—which were done with dogs and unfortunately preceded current protections against cruelty to animals—taught him about the concept he called “learned helplessness.” When dogs who were given painful shocks were able to stop the shocks by pressing a lever, they learned quickly to stop the pain. And they were able, in subsequent experiments, to figure out how to escape painful shocks administered in a kennel cage by leaping over a small barrier. Dogs who hadn’t been given a means to stop the pain, however, had learned the lesson that they were helpless against it. When they were put in a kennel cage and administered shocks, they ignored the route to escape and just lay down in the kennel and whimpered. From this Seligman concluded that when we feel we have no control over our circumstances, when we believe that nothing we do can alleviate our suffering or improve our lives, we stop taking action on our own behalf because we believe there is no point. This is what happened at the camps, when former inmates left through the gates only to return to prison, to sit vacantly, unsure what to do with their freedom now that it had finally come.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 173

For me, learning that only I can do what I can do the way I can do it meant overthrowing the compulsive achiever in me, who was always chasing more and more pieces of paper in the hopes of affirming my worth. And it meant learning to reframe my trauma, to see in my painful past evidence of my strength and gifts and opportunities for growth, rather than confirmation of my weakness or damage.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 175

All of the survivors I met had one thing in common with me and with one another: We had no control over the most consuming facts of our lives, but we had the power to determine how we experienced life after trauma. Survivors could continue to be victims long after the oppression had ended, or they could learn to thrive. In my dissertation research, I discovered and articulated my personal conviction and my clinical touchstone: We can choose to be our own jailors, or we can choose to be free.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 178

In therapy I timidly say I want to try it, I want to express that rage, but with a professional there to help pull me out if I get stuck in it. I get on the floor. I try to yell, but I can't, I'm too scared, I curl into a smaller and smaller ball. I need to feel a limit around me, a boundary, I need to feel something to push against. I tell my therapist to sit on me. He is heavy, his weight almost suffocates me. I think I'm going to pass out. I am about to tap the floor, to beg him to let me up, to give up this silly experiment. But then a scream comes out of me, so long and full and anguished that it frightens me, what awful wounded thing would make a noise like that? But I can't stop making the sound. It feels good. More than thirty years of silenced ghosts come roaring out of me now, the full-throated outpouring of my sorrow. It feels good. I scream, I scream, I push against the weight bearing down on me. My therapist doesn't make it easy, and the effort makes me cry and sweat. What happens? What happens when the long-denied part of me is let out? Nothing happens. I feel the force of the rage, and it doesn't kill me after all. I'm okay. I'm okay. I'm alive. It still isn't easy for me to talk about the past. It is deeply painful to confront the fear and the loss all over again each time I remember or recount it. But from this moment on, I understood that feelings, no matter how powerful, aren't fatal. And they are temporary. Suppressing the feelings only makes it harder to let them go. Expression is the opposite of depression.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 212

I rest in the wakeful uncertainty. I try to open myself, to let my intuition speak. For some reason I think of a story I heard of a very talented Jewish boy, an artist. He was told to go to Vienna to art school, but he didn't have any money for the journey. He walked from Czechoslovakia to Vienna, only to be denied a seat at the exams because he was Jewish. He begged. He had come so far, he had walked the whole way, could he at least take the test, could he be allowed that much? They let him sit for the exam, and he passed. He was so talented that he was offered a spot at the school despite his ancestry. Sitting beside him at the exam was a boy named Adolf Hitler, who was not accepted at the school. But the Jewish boy was. And all his life, this man, who had left Europe and lived in Los Angeles, had felt guilty, because if Hitler hadn't suffered this loss, if he hadn't lost to a Jew, he might not have felt the need to scapegoat Jews. The Holocaust might not have happened. Like children who have been abused, or whose parents divorce, we find a way to blame ourselves.

Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 225

Maybe to heal isn't to erase the scar, or even to make the scar. To heal is to cherish the wound.

Indeed

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 226

I had an opportunity to love this young person, just for him, for his singular being and our shared humanity. The opportunity to welcome him to say anything, feel any feeling, without the fear of being judged. I remembered a German family that was stationed for a while at Fort Bliss, how the girl would climb into my lap and call me Oma—Grandma—and this little benediction from a child felt like the answer to the fantasy I'd had as I passed through German towns with Magda and the other inmates, as the children spat at us, when I dreamed of a day when German children would know they didn't have to hate me. And in my own lifetime, that day came to pass. I thought of a statistic I read, that most of the members of white supremacist groups in America lost one of their parents before they were ten years old. These are lost children looking for an identity, looking for a way to feel strength, to feel like they matter. And so I gathered myself up and I looked at this young man as lovingly as I could. I said three words: "Tell me more." I didn't say much more than that during his first visit. I listened. I empathized. He was so much like me after the war. We had both lost our parents—his to neglect and abandonment, mine to death. We both thought of ourselves as damaged goods. In letting go of my judgment, in letting go of my desire for him to be or believe anything different, by seeing his vulnerability and his yearning for belonging and love, in allowing myself to get past my own fear and anger in order to accept and love him, I was able to give him something his brown shirt and brown boots couldn't—an authentic image of his own worth. When he left my office that day, he didn't know a thing about my history. But he had seen an alternative to hate and prejudice, he was no longer talking about killing, he had shown me his soft smile. And I had taken responsibility that I not perpetuate hostility and blame, that I not bow to hate and say, You are too much for me.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 227

Now, on the eve of my return to prison, I remind myself that each of us has an Adolf Hitler and a Corrie ten Boom within us. We have the capacity to hate and the capacity to love. Which one we reach for—our inner Hitler or inner ten Boom—is up to us.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 232

Could I have saved my mother? Maybe. And I will live for all of the rest of my life with that possibility. And I can castigate myself for having made the wrong choice. That is my prerogative. Or I can accept that the more important choice is not the one I made when I was hungry and terrified, when we were surrounded by dogs and guns and uncertainty, when I was sixteen; it's the one I make now. The choice to accept myself as I am: human, imperfect. And the choice to be responsible for my own happiness. To forgive my flaws and reclaim my innocence. To stop asking why I deserved to survive. To function as well as I can, to commit myself to serve others, to do everything in my power to honor my parents, to see to it that they did not die in vain. To do my best, in my limited capacity, so future generations don't experience what I did. To be useful, to be used up, to survive and to thrive so I can use every moment to make the world a better place. And to finally, finally stop running from the past. To do everything possible to redeem it, and then let it go. I can make the choice that all of us can make. I can't ever change the past. But there is a life I can save: It is mine. The one I am living right now, this precious moment.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 237

Our painful experiences aren't a liability—they're a gift. They give us perspective and meaning, an opportunity to find our unique purpose and our strength.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 242

In the Haggadah, the Jewish text that tells the story of liberation from slavery in Egypt and teaches the prayers and rituals for seder, the special Passover feast, there are four questions that the youngest member of the family traditionally gets to ask—the questions it was my privilege to ask at my childhood seders, that I asked the last night I spent with my parents in our home. In my therapeutic practice I have my own version of the four questions, which I developed years ago with the help of several colleagues when we were sharing strategies for beginning a session with a new patient. These are the questions I asked Ling and Jun to answer now, in writing, so they could liberate themselves from their victimhood. 1. What do you want? This is a deceptively simple question. It can be much more difficult than we realize to give ourselves permission to know and listen to ourselves, to align ourselves with our desires. How often when we answer this question do we say what we want for someone else? I reminded Ling and Jun that they needed to answer this question for themselves. To say I want Jun to stop drinking or I want Ling to stop nagging was to avoid the question. 2. Who wants it? This is our charge and our struggle: to understand our own expectations for ourselves versus trying to live up to others' expectations of us. My father became a tailor because his father wouldn't allow him to become a doctor. My father was good at his profession, he was commended and awarded for it—but he was never the one who wanted it, and he always regretted his un-lived dream. It's our responsibility to act in service of our authentic selves. Sometimes this means giving up the need to please others, giving up our need for others' approval. 3. What are you going to do about it? I believe in the power of positive thinking—but change and freedom also require positive action. Anything we practice, we become better at. If we practice anger, we'll have more anger. If we practice fear, we'll have more fear. In many cases, we actually work very hard to ensure that we go nowhere. Change is about noticing what's no longer working and stepping out of the familiar, imprisoning patterns. 4. When? In *Gone with the Wind*, my mother's favorite book, Scarlett O'Hara, when confronted with a difficulty, says, "I'll think about it tomorrow. ... After all, tomorrow is another day." If we are to evolve instead of revolve, it's time to take action now.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 245

I used to ask my patients, "How can I help you?" But that kind of question makes them Humpty Dumpty, waiting around on the pavement to be put back together again. And it makes me the king's horses and the king's men, ultimately powerless to fix another person. I've changed my question. Now I say, "How can I be useful to you?" How can I support you as you take responsibility for yourself?

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 250

Viktor Frankl writes, Man's search for meaning is the primary motivation in his life. ... This meaning is unique and specific in that it must and can be fulfilled by him alone; only then does it achieve a significance which will satisfy his own will to meaning. When we abdicate taking responsibility for ourselves, we are giving up our ability to create and discover meaning. In other words, we give up on life.

Highlight (Yellow) and Note | Page 254

when you lose your temper, you might feel strong in the moment, but really you are handing your power over. Strength isn't reacting, it's responding—feeling your feelings, thinking them over, and planning an effective action to bring you closer to your goal.

Truth

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 257

This is an extremely vulnerable stage in the therapeutic process, and there is an ongoing debate in the psychology and neuroscience communities about how useful or harmful it is for a patient to mentally relive a traumatic situation, or physically return to a site of trauma. When I received my training, I learned to use hypnosis in order to help survivors reexperience the traumatic event in order to stop being hostage to it. In more recent years, studies have shown that putting someone mentally back in a traumatic experience can be dangerous—psychologically reliving a painful event can actually retraumatize a survivor. For example, after the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center, it was discovered that the more times people saw the image of the towers going down on TV, the more trauma they had years later. Repeated encounters with a past event can reinforce rather than release the fearful and painful feelings. In my practice and in my own experience, I have seen the effectiveness of mentally reliving a traumatic episode, but it must be done with absolute safety, and with a well-trained professional who can give the patient control over how long and how deeply he or she stays in the past. Even then, it isn't the best practice for all patients or all therapists.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 258

There is no forgiveness without rage.

Highlight (Yellow) | Page 263

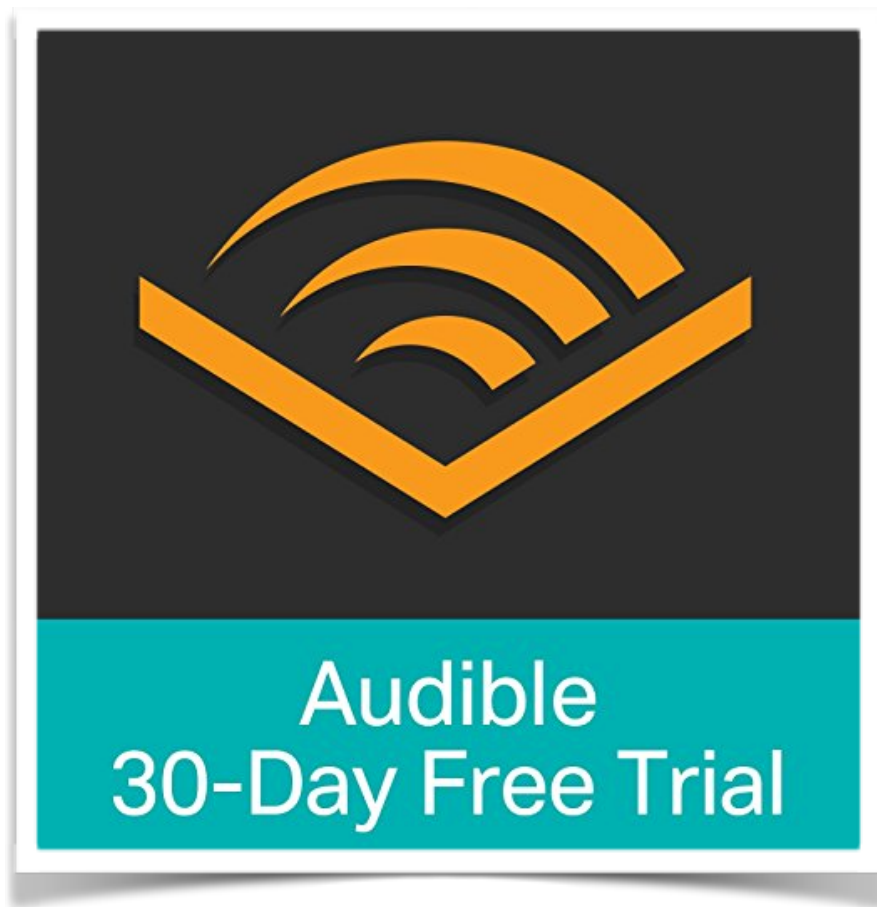
Time doesn't heal. It's what you do with the time. Healing is possible when we choose to take responsibility, when we choose to take risks, and finally, when we choose to release the wound, to let go of the past or the grief.

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Mourning rites and rituals can be an extremely important component of grief work. I think that's why religious and cultural practices include clear mourning rituals—there's a protected space and structure within which to begin to experience the feelings of loss. But the mourning period also has a clear end. From that point on, the loss isn't a separate dimension of life—the loss is integrated into life. If we stay in a state of perpetual mourning, we are choosing a victim's mentality, believing I'm never going to get over it. If we stay stuck in mourning, it is as though our lives are over too.

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